

## **Planning for Duluth's Streams, Comments Welcome**

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Hi! I'm Jesse Schomberg and you're listening to a special edition of The Sea Grant Files. It's special because I'm hoping you have a pen handy and that you'll have time before April 18 to comment on strategies to improve the way we manage all the streams and rivers that flow through Duluth, Minnesota.

There are two Minnesota Pollution Control Agency reports that are open for public comment right now.

One is called the Draft Duluth Urban Area Streams Total Maximum Daily Load (yes, it's a mouthfull!) ... it's about the amount of sediment, bacteria, and contaminants that flow from the land into these streams, and how this affects what lives there. This report also includes the best ideas we have for how to reduce that load of pollutants to achieve water quality standards. The Federal Clean Water Act requires total maximum daily loads to be developed for surface waters that don't meet water quality standards.

The other report is called Draft Duluth Urban Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies. Minnesota is now using a watershed approach to manage the state's 80 major watersheds that includes assessing and analyzing water quality, public participation, planning, implementation, and measuring results in a 10-year cycle. This report reviews the results of monitoring and analysis in the Duluth area's streams, rivers, and lakes, and lays out a whole list of strategies for both restoring those that have problems, and, just as important, keeping those that don't have problems from getting them in the future (that's the protection part!).

The public comment period on these Duluth Urban Area Streams reports is open until April 18th. In a way, this is your chance to speak now or forever hold your peace about these reports and what you want to see happen next. The reports list the type and quantity of pollutants, identify where the pollution comes from and propose ways to return water quality to an acceptable level (or keep it there if it's in good shape!). These reports set the stage for what projects the cities, counties, state agencies, and others will do in the future. A similar report was released last month on North Shore streams.

Do you have that pen?! Here's the information I'd like you to write down. [www.LakeSuperiorStreams.org](http://www.LakeSuperiorStreams.org): we put a link right on the homepage for you to reach the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency information about commenting.

The area in question ... 141-square-miles ... stretches from Mission Creek in West Duluth north and east to the Lester River basin.

I'm particularly interested in your comments because I'm part of the Duluth Urban Watershed Advisory Committee. We worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and colleagues from the Natural Resources Research Institute at the University of Minnesota Duluth and other agencies on streams like Amity, Chester and Kingsbury creeks; and the Lester River, which is large enough for steelhead and salmon spawning runs.

If you read the reports you'll see that the designated trout streams assessed all had at least one impairment... like high levels of *E. coli*, or too much chloride from excess road salt. The *E. coli* could be coming from wildlife, pets, failing septic systems and leaking sewer lines. The road salt? Well, you know winter in Duluth.

Amity Creek and the Lester River were found to carry too much sediment. Miller Creek, which receives everything that flows from the parking lots, roads and roofs around the Miller Hill Mall, is impaired by *E. coli*, excess road salt and not enough invertebrates ...such as aquatic insects and snails. Its water can be unusually warm at certain times of the year. Still, most of the streams included in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency study ... even Miller Creek.... support brook trout.

The 43 streams around here, 16 of which are state-designated trout streams, often start in boggy headwaters then plunge hundreds of feet down bedrock. Some are characterized by unstable clay banks that are prone to slumping. Ongoing development and aging wastewater and stormwater systems increase the potential for sending water into streams that's dirty and warm. If we're not careful, most of Duluth's trout streams are projected to get so warm by 2050 that brook trout won't be able to live in them.

Again, I'm asking you to carve out a moment of your life to comment on the area's water. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency seeks public comments on regional reports before sending them on to the Environmental Protection Agency for approval. The reports are to be the basis for developing projects to solve water quality issues. Projects include stream bank and channel stabilization, minimizing grass lawns and impervious areas such as paved parking lots, planting trees and establishing conservation easements.

Several projects have already happened, such as stream channel restoration along Chester Creek and filtering parking lot runoff near Miller Creek.

According to the reports, it's critical to preserve wetlands and forested areas at the headwaters and along the streams to help buffer water quality.

We're not going to be able to fix the area's water quality problems without engaging people like you. Even the actions of one landowner, good or bad ... even your actions ... can impact a stream.

View the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency reports online through our link at [www.LakeSuperiorStreams.com](http://www.LakeSuperiorStreams.com) and comment before April 18.

Join me, Minnesota Sea Grant, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and others in envisioning a place where "our water resources and associated ecosystems become healthier and more resilient through public engagement and local government collaboration." We're developing a voluntary network to help communities from Proctor to Lakewood Township to work with federal and state agencies on water management, to prioritize projects, and to update local codes and ordinances that affect water resources.

If you have questions, the website, [www.LakeSuperiorStreams.org](http://www.LakeSuperiorStreams.org), has a lot of great information about our local streams; you can also call me, Jesse Schomberg at Minnesota Sea Grant. My number is (218) 726-6182.

This episode of the Sea Grant Files was produced by Rachel Wachtler, Sharon Moen, Maija Jenson, KUMD, and me, Jesse Schomberg. For more information or to listen to more episodes of The Sea Grant Files visit Minnesota Sea Grant at [www.seagrants.umn.edu](http://www.seagrants.umn.edu). You can also follow Minnesota Sea Grant on Facebook or Twitter. Thanks for listening.